

Decision Notice  
& Finding of No Significant Impact  
**Sedona Administrative Site Sale**  
USDA Forest Service  
Red Rock Ranger District, Coconino National Forest  
Coconino County, Arizona

## **Decision and Reasons for the Decision**

### **Background**

The proposal to sell the Sedona Administrative Site is a result of special legislation, the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000, P.L. 106-458 passed in November 2000, which allows the Forest Service to exchange or sell several sites in various locations in Arizona and use the proceeds of those sales to acquire, construct or improve administrative facilities. This legislation responded to a long standing issue of Verde Valley Forest Service offices being in locations that do not best serve National Forest or public purposes and limited funding for administrative site facilities construction. Proceeds from land sales in combination with Forest Service funding will be used to build ranger station facilities at new sites in the Verde Valley starting in Fall 2005. The Sedona Ranger Station was one site identified in the legislation: This is a 21 acre parcel on Brewer Road in Sedona where the existing Red Rock Ranger District (Coconino National Forest) office is located. The environmental assessment (EA) documents the analysis of one alternative to meet this need.

### **Decision**

Based upon my review of the alternatives, I have decided to implement Alternative 2, which is the Proposed Action. This alternative would sell the existing 21-acre Sedona Administrative Site with the identified mitigation measures associated with the historic buildings.

When compared to the other alternatives this alternative will allow the Forest Service to sell an island of National Forest land surrounded by residential and commercial development within the City of Sedona and use the proceeds of that sale to construct administrative facilities at another location that better serves the public and meets the needs for ranger district management. Selection of this alternative does not specifically address the method of sale of the property or how the property will be developed after the sale. Current City of Sedona processes and ordinances will be followed in any future development of the property. While selection of this alternative does have the potential for residential and other types of development on the 21-acres, these uses are not inconsistent with the development in the surrounding area. There is interest in this parcel by the community for possible use of a portion of this property for a town square or park facility in conjunction with the historic buildings. This decision does not preclude this interest being met in the future however it also does not set aside or designate any portion of the property for this type of use. Development of this property will likely occur based on the existing City of Sedona land use code and zoning of community facilities and medium density residential and the ordinances that oversee protection of the two designated City landmarks

(Project record #2.0, 30.0). A successful buyer of this property would be required to process any development through the City of Sedona and interests of the community would be expressed and considered in coordination with the City. The Proposed Action alternative meets requirements under the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000, National Historic Preservation Act, and National Environmental Policy Act and is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Resource and Management Plan which identified these 21-acres as appropriate for conveyance and also identified the need to better visitor services in the Sedona area.

## **Other Alternatives Considered**

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered the No Action alternative. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on page 9

### **Alternative 1**

#### **No Action**

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. The 21-acre Sedona Administrative Site would stay in National Forest ownership and likely remain some kind of federal administrative site. A new facility would likely not be built and visitor services would continue at current levels in the short-term. The existing ranger station site would continue to be crowded and provide limited space for both employees and public parking and information services.

### **Alternative 2**

Alternative 2, Proposed Action, as stated above would sell the existing 21-acre Sedona Administrative Site and use the proceeds to build new administrative facilities in a location that better serves both the public and provides better employee working spaces. Development of the 21-acres would likely occur through coordination with the City of Sedona and their approved public processes and ordinances and rules for development. Under current zoning, development could include medium density residential development in the west portion of the property and some kind of community facility use on the east portion of the property. The City of Sedona is currently conducting planning for the area surrounding and including this parcel. Other land use designations may occur as a result of this planning effort.

## **Public Involvement**

As described in the background, the need for this action arose in the late 1990's and authority to institute this sale occurred through the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000 legislation. A proposal to sell both this 21-acre parcel and another parcel in Camp Verde was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions beginning in July 2003. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment through a mailing sent on November 20, 2003 to a list of 117 neighbors, government entities and interested parties. An email with the letter was also sent to a group (51 people) associated with the local Sedona Women group who had expressed interest and held several meetings in preparation for the proposal. A news release dated November 24, 2003 was sent to Verde Valley media announcing the consideration of the sale proposals for both Sedona and Camp Verde and requested public comments. An article appeared in the Red Rock News and Verde Independent newspapers. In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency met regularly with a group of interested neighbors and citizens interested in the town square concept. Fifteen letters were received during this initial

scoping period, some which focused more on the Camp Verde Site and others on the Sedona site. Sedona site concerns were focused on preservation of historical buildings, future land use and development concerns like lighting, traffic and adjacent property owners concerns about future development on the property.

A Summary of the Proposal to Sell the Sedona Administrative Site and opportunity to comment on the proposal was announced through a legal notice in the Arizona Daily Sun on June 26, 2004 providing for the formal 30-day comment on the proposal. Eleven letters and copies of the Summary document were sent to those that had commented in November 2003. A news release was sent out to local Verde Valley media on June 23, 2004 announcing the 30-day comment period. Six comment letters were received during the 30-day comment period, mostly supporting the “Heart of Sedona” town square proposal and future uses but indicating the desire to preserve the historic structures in some form including public ownership. One comment letter indicated concerns about the ability of providing better services at a new site, as well as water quantity concerns about development. The City of Sedona Historic Preservation committee commented after the close of the 30-day comment period expressing questions about lead paint removal and renovation on the historic buildings and retention of fixtures and preservation of rock walls at the site. Comments are in the project record for both the November 2003 and June 2004 comment periods.

Using the comments from the public, other agencies, and the City of Sedona, the interdisciplinary team identified one significant issue regarding the effects of the proposed action. The main issue of concern included preservation of the historic buildings and the connection with the historic development of the Sedona area (see EA page 4). Since the concerns had been addressed in the proposed action mitigation measures or are related to development of the property and outside the scope of the analysis, only the Proposed Action and No Action alternative were evaluated. Several comments included concerns about future development, such as lighting, noise, traffic and water use. While these are concerns that relate to the potential development of this property, these impacts are within the scope of the City of Sedona’s development process and procedures and are outside the scope of the Forest Service’s decision.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety, because lead paint remediation on the two historic buildings was completed and other traffic safety issues are related to the ultimate development of the property and will be overseen by the City of Sedona and addressed through their development approval processes.

3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because the City of Sedona's historic preservation ordinances require coordination and preservation of historic landmarks in Sedona. The two historic buildings would be protected and preserved under the existing City ordinances. There are no other sensitive resources or unique characteristics on the site. The ridgeline on the west side of the property is visible from many areas in Sedona and is of interest to many community members. While under current zoning this ridgeline may be developed, interest in maintaining this undeveloped view will fall into the responsibility of the City of Sedona during the development process and could possibly be preserved. Under current ordinances, height limitations could apply to development in this area and impacts would therefore be reduced. There are no other unique characteristics in the property.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project and the ultimate development and change in use of the property will be through a subsequent City of Sedona development process.
5. There is considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. The Forest Service has completed many land exchanges in the Sedona area. Development of the 21- acre property ranger station will likely be similar to what is seen in various other areas of the community around the property. Effects of that development are typical and not uncertain.
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because this property is isolated and other properties associated with the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000 could be sold in the future, such as the Camp Verde site. However, the Act does not require the sale and these sales are separate decisions and not related. While construction of new administrative facilities for the Red Rock Ranger District and Camp Verde administrative sites will use the proceeds of this sale for construction costs, it does not require the sales of other sites.
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant.
8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because the City of Sedona ordinances protect the City Historic Landmarks (two ranger station buildings) as stated in #3 above. No other items or effects would occur as a result of the sale of the property. As cultural resource survey and report was completed and the Arizona State Historic Preservation office (August 31, 2004) has concurred with the findings in this report that mitigation as described is acceptable and clearance for the sale of the property was given.
9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973, because a Biological Assessment and Evaluation was completed on August 26, 2004 for the sale of the property. This document states that the sale and likely potential development of the property in the future would not adversely affect any endangered or threatened

species or its habitat. Due to the limited number of threatened, endangered and sensitive species and the limited effects of the proposed project on these species, no consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service was required.

10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The action is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

## **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

This decision to sell the 21-acre Sedona Administrative Site (Proposed Action) is consistent with the intent of the forest plan's long term goals and objectives. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for providing improved visitor services and that identified this 21- acre parcel as base in exchange for the purpose of obtaining a new ranger station site. (Land and Resource Management Plan, page 90).

A Biological Assessment and Evaluation (BA&E) was completed for Sedona Administrative Site Sale dated August 26, 2004 to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

The decision to sell the property is also consistent with Public Law (P.L.) 106-458 the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000, which authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to dispose of certain Forest Service Administrative Sites, including this 21- acre site, within the State of Arizona.

Heritage Resources Clearance was obtained for this project on September 3, 2004 to ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800).

A mineral report is currently being finalized which documents a field examination that found that the subject parcel has low potential for locatable, salable and leasable minerals.

A Hazardous Material Examination of the project area was completed to ensure compliance with Forest Service Manual 2166. Remediation of lead paint was completed on the two historic buildings. Hazardous materials in reportable quantities will be removed from the site prior to sale. Only minor amounts of hazardous materials are present on the site, such as fuels and oils and small amounts of asbestos.

A Water Resources Evaluation was completed for the project area to ensure compliance with Forest Service Manual 2527.03 and Executive Orders 11988 (floodplains) and 11990 (wetlands). No wetlands will be lost as a result of the sale of the property. Floodplains located within the property are protected from development through county floodplain regulations.

## **Implementation Date**

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are

filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

## **Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with: Appeal Deciding Officer, USDA Forest Service, 333 Broadway Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87103 or fax (505) 842-3110.

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), [or](#) Word (.doc) to: [appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us) . In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of this notice in the Arizona Daily Sun, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45 day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the Arizona Daily Sun, newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

## **Contact**

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Judy Adams, Lands Staff, Red Rock Ranger District, PO Box 300, 250 Brewer Road, Sedona, AZ 86339, (928) 203-7506.

/s/ NORA B. RASURE  
Forest Supervisor  
Coconino National Forest

September 16, 2004

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